

Consumer Reports **Health**
BEST BUY DRUGS

Free Guidance for Consumers on Prescription Medicines



NEWS UPDATE

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Generic migraine drug could relieve your pain and save you money

Almost everybody suffers from a headache once in a while, but if the pain is excruciating and disabling, you could have a migraine. This type of headache is fairly common, afflicting about 30 million U.S. adults and for unknown reasons, they occur three times as often in women than in men. The symptoms include throbbing pain on one or both sides of the head, nausea, vomiting, and sensitivity to movement, light or noise.

If you suffer from a migraine attack, an over-the-counter pain reliever is a good first option. Acetaminophen (Tylenol and generics), aspirin, ibuprofen (Advil and generics), naproxen (Aleve and generics) or combination products that contain acetaminophen, aspirin, and caffeine (Excedrin Extra Strength, Excedrin Migraine, and generics) are worth a try.

If an OTC doesn't work for you, however, it may be time to reach for a stronger category of medicine, called triptans. Figuring out which triptan is right for you can be, well, a headache, and an expensive one at that (a single pill can be as much as \$43). [A recent Consumer Reports Best Buy Drug report on Triptans](#) considered all of the available evidence for effectiveness, safety, and side effects, as well as cost, and for the Best Buy Drug selection chose:

✓ BEST BUY DRUG Generic sumatriptan tablets, nasal spray and injectable forms

Sumatriptan is the only triptan available as a less expensive generic, and studies have found that it is as effective or better than most of the other triptans when it comes to pain relief. At \$20 to \$24 per tablet, the pill form will save you money over the other brand names triptans, which cost from \$29 to \$43 per tablet. The generic sumatriptan nasal spray and injectable formulations are more expensive, but these may be good options for migraine sufferers who experience nausea and vomiting and can't take a tablet.

If sumatriptan doesn't work for you, we recommend trying rizatriptan (Maxalt). Studies indicate it works very well in delivering pain relief within two hours compared with many of the other triptans. But it is more expensive than generic sumatriptan tablets, ranging in cost from \$35 to \$38 per pill, depending on the dose and formulation.

All of these drugs have similar safety profiles and can cause mild to serious side effects. The most common ones are dizziness, numbness, tingling, flushing, sleepiness, and fatigue. Triptans have been associated with rare cases of heart attack, life-threatening disturbances of heart rhythm, stroke, and death.

For more detail on drugs to treat migraine headaches, see [our Consumer Reports Best Buy Drug report on Triptans](#).